

in common discourse, though they were even benedictions to the Almighty, which he has often heard so ill-timed as to have an irreverent and almost a ludicrous effect. In a man of correct and refined taste, the happiest improvement in point of veneration for genuine religion will produce no tolerance for such habits. Nor will the dislike to them be lessened by ever so perfect a conviction of the sincere piety of any of the persons who have fallen into them. I shall be justified in laying great stress on this particular; for I have known instances of extreme mischief done to the feelings relative to religion, in young persons especially, through the continued irritation of disgust caused by such displeasing habits deforming personal piety.

In the conversation of illiterate Christians the supposed man of taste has perhaps frequently heard the most unfortunate metaphors and similes, employed to explain or enforce evangelical sentiments; and probably, if he twenty times recollected one of those sentiments, the repulsive figure was sure to recur to his imagination. If he has heard so many of these, that each Christian topic has acquired its appropriate offensive images, you can easily conceive what a lively perception of the importance of the subject itself must be requisite to overcome the disgust of the associations. The feeling accompanying these topics, as connected with these distasteful ideas, will be somewhat like that which spoils the pleasure of reading a noble poet, Virgil for instance, when each admired passage recalls the phrases and images into which it has been degraded in that kind of imitation denominated *travesty*. It may be added, that the reluctance to think of the subject because it is connected with these ideas, strengthens the connexion. For often the striving not to dwell on the disagreeable images, produces a mischievous reaction by which they press in more forcibly. The tenacity with which ideas adhere to the mind, is in proportion to the degree of interest, whether pleasing or un-pleasing with which they affect it: and an idea cannot well excite a stronger kind of interest than the earnest wish to escape from it. If we could cease to dislike it, it would soon cease to haunt us. It may also be observed, that the infrequency of thinking on the evangelical subjects, will confirm the injurious associations. The same mental law prevails in regard to subjects as to persons. If any